

CIVILIAN DEFENSE IN OREGON

By Jack A. Hayes, Acting Administrator, Oregon State Defense Council

Almost seven months before Pearl Harbor the State of Oregon began work on the structure of a civilian defense organization. The organization began when Charles A. Sprague, then Governor, appointed a state defense council and charged Jerrold Owen as state coordinator to set up such an organization for the protection of the lives and property of the people of the state.

With little or no pattern to follow, the outline of the organization developed slowly but was to prove to be one of the most effective, administratively, in the United States. Regarding the county as the political sub-division best able to understand the problems of the area within its boundaries, county defense councils were set up in the 36 counties of the state. Each of the county defense councils was made responsible for the development and operation of civilian defense within the confines of the county.

The members of the county defense councils were appointed by the governor following the submission of names to him by the county judge in each county. Each county defense council named a coordinator who was responsible for the administration of the organization. Experience proved that some county defense councils were unwieldy because of their large size and in almost every case an executive committee was named, which, with the coordinator, established policy and carried on the operation of civilian defense in the county. The policy adopted by the State Defense Council in dealing only with the county defense council and not directly with each city or town in the state made it possible to avoid many of the confusions and irritations which developed in other states not similarly set up.

Following the establishment of the county defense councils the Oregon State Defense Council provided qualified instructors who visited each county in turn, and established training programs fitted to the needs of the individual county.

The work of training civilian volunteers was implemented by the establishment of regional training schools set up both by the Army and by the National Office of Civilian Defense. At its peak, in the early months of 1943, this training program had produced just under a hundred thousand trained members of the various Protective Services.

The primary responsibilities of the State Defense Council are to provide for the organization and training of civilian volunteers to meet the threat of enemy attack, principally air attack; to provide information and direction for the county defense councils; and to act as a screen between the national Office of Civilian Defense and the county defense councils, eliminating those programs without value or application to the local picture and stressing those of value to the state.

In the fall of 1941, at the request of the military authorities, the Aircraft Warning Service was organized, thousands of volunteer observers organized and observation posts set up throughout that area of the state west of the Cascades. When war was declared on December 8, 1941, more than 500 of these posts were alerted and remained in operation, most of them on a 24 hour basis, until they were placed on the present reserve status by the Army on October 16, 1943.

Upon recommendation of Governor Earl Snell the 1943 session of the state legislature passed what is known as the "Oregon Civilian Defense Act of 1943". Under its terms a legal basis was provided for the organization and operation of civilian defense in Oregon. Emergency powers were granted to the governor as Director of the Oregon State Defense Council to enable him to marshal and apply all the resources of the state in counteracting the effects of enemy attack.

Many responsibilities have been placed by the military authorities upon the shoulders of civilian defense since Pearl Harbor. Among these are included responsibility for the enforcement of the dimout restrictions, now at least temporarily, in abeyance, which at one time were required by reason of the very

material threat to our shipping presented by enemy undersea attack and enforcement of the blackout restrictions which are still in effect. Many other tasks of a confidential nature have been required of civilian defense by the military authorities. Close liaison has been maintained between the Western Defense Command, the Ninth Service Command, the Fourth Air Force, and the Oregon State Defense Council and such liaison will continue in effect until the termination of hostilities.

The State of Oregon was one of the first in the nation to establish a state control center designed to provide a location into which would feed reports of enemy action and from which would flow assistance to any community or area in the state which might find itself involved beyond its capacity to care for itself. The center, operating under direction of the Governor, is still capable of rapid activation and will be so maintained for the duration.

On July 1, 1942, all war-connected services other than protection were merged into one division known as the Civilian War Services, in conformity to a national plan.

Through this division volunteers have been recruited for salvage campaigns, war bond sales, nutrition training, war price and rationing boards, recreation programs, child health, welfare, war recruiting, pre-induction programs, and similar activities related to the war effort.

Much attention has been given by the state Office of Civilian War Services to encourage recruiting of volunteers for federal programs after such programs have been rationalized to fit conditions in this state. Another task performed by this office is reviewing proposed federal campaigns and eliminating non-essential ones so that volunteers are not too heavily burdened.

In the fall of 1942 organization of the block leader plan began wherein volunteers were assigned the task of informing their neighbors of matters relating to the war effort.

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Through establishment of civilian service corps in the majority of counties, not only have many war programs been stimulated, but such duplication of effort has been avoided because of reliance placed by federal agencies on this organization for assistance and channeling.

Serving both the protective and service groups in a state Information and Public Relations Division manned by professional newspaper and advertising men and women who volunteer their time to prepare radio scripts, newspaper articles, and other publicity material for promotion of civilian defense activities in the state.

In December, 1943, Jerrold Owen, Administrator of the Oregon State Defense Council, entered the Armed Forces as a Captain in the Military Government branch and is now serving in that capacity in Occupied German. He was succeeded by his assistant, James D. Olson, who was appointed Acting Administrator by Governor Snell. Mr. Olson effectively administered the office until he resigned on June 1, 1944, to return to newspaper business, his life-long profession. Jack A. Hayes, then as now, on loan from the State Fire Marshal Department and serving as Director of Civilian Protection for the State Defense Council, was appointed Acting Administrator to succeed Mr. Olson.

Of current interest is a survey of the protective services, recently completed showing more than 35,000 persons standing by ready for any emergency. Added to these are the thousands of volunteers who are still working for victory in the many fields of war service not connected with the protective services. The Oregon State Defense Council is deeply grateful to these faithful volunteers who are sticking to their assigned tasks until hostilities have ended.

Being fully aware of changes wrought by the steady improvement in the war situation which has already culminated in the unconditional surrender of Germany, Governor Snell undertook a review of the operation of the Oregon State Defense Council in the autumn of 1944. After the most careful consideration of current responsibilities and the foreseeable needs of the future, the governor

directed a reduction in the administrative staff of the State Defense Council to the activity of the Acting Administrator and the minimum stenographic services needed to care for essential activities. The activities of the various state committees was reviewed and those of value encouraged to continue their work. Activities which had passed their period of usefulness were terminated. The governor then recommended to the 1945 session of the State Legislature a sharp curtailment in the budget appropriation for the Council. Where the appropriation for the biennial period 1943-1945 had been \$107,000.00 with more than \$50,000.00 of this amount unexpended and reverting to the General Fund, the recommended appropriation for the biennial period 1945-1947 was \$6,500.00. The legislature accepted the governor's recommendations and a long stride had been taken to adapt the operation of civilian defense in Oregon to the needs of the times.

On May 2, 1945, President Harry S. Truman notified the Congress that he was withdrawing the budget of the Office of Civilian Defense and terminating that agency as of June 30, 1945. The president specifically requested that the various states and communities preserve certain elements of civilian defense in the service of the nation, acting under their own authority, until the war and its attendant emergency is completely over.

Under the law, civilian defense is set up in Oregon for the duration plus not to exceed six months or until the emergency shall have been declared to have ended. It is the policy of this state to continue the necessary activities of civilian defense until such time as these activities are no longer needed.